CHAPTER 4: PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER SURVEYS

Introduction

The Year 1 Evaluation Report (Wise, et al., 2000) contained a chapter describing preliminary analyses of data (Chapter 5) from our Teacher and Principal Surveys. Due to time constraints, it was necessary to analyze a subset of survey responses at that time; analyses were restricted to surveys that had been returned by June 19, 2000. This supplemental report includes all surveys received (i.e., an additional 8 principal surveys and 45 teacher surveys). This chapter has been written as a replacement for Chapter 5 in our initial report, rather than a supplement. In order to facilitate comparison, the original chapter structure has been kept intact. Findings are little changed by inclusion of the additional surveys, but the descriptions here provide a more complete representation of the opinions of principals and teachers currently working in California high schools. We have included an additional analysis of the representativeness of the schools responding to each survey.

Educational reform efforts such as California's high school exit examination will exert an impact beyond just the receipt of a standards-based diploma. By providing feedback about student performance, the reform will serve as a catalyst for change throughout districts and schools. In addition to the performance information, the assessment is seen as a way to influence and improve teaching and learning. Consequently, a key research issue is the relationship between the exit exam and teaching practices advocated by reform standards. One purpose of a thorough evaluation, then, is to find out about what is going on in the classrooms.

Surveys are one component of the evaluation method to examine such consequences and assess the impact of the HSEE over time. Two surveys were administered to capture baseline data: one for principals and another for teachers in the same schools. The principal survey requested demographic and background information about the school, students, and parents. The teacher survey emphasized classroom practices. Given administration of these surveys early in the HSEE development and implementation process, both principal and teacher surveys contained several open-ended questions to allow the respondents to clarify their responses and to inform HumRRO of any misunderstandings or omissions we might have about the operation of California schools and their relationship to district and state operations.

The information collection and review conducted for the background report for the HSEE (Wise, et al., 2000, Chapter 2) were critical in formulating the guiding issues and questions for the surveys. The background report helped to establish the context for developing and implementing a graduation test by examining other states' experiences. Given the nature of this baseline data collection, using a small sample of California schools at a time when the exit examination is just being developed and pilot tested with another sample of schools, the surveys required direction for asking anticipatory types of questions. Because the Board has not yet made final decisions on the nature and content of the exam, the survey needed to allow for low levels of planning and preparation without attaching negative connotations to such levels. However, the researchers needed to provide a means to describe any early

planning and preparation they did find. Based on HumRRO's prior experience during the pre-implementation stages of some major educational initiatives, we used an understanding of the process of "early and late planners and implementers" to develop survey questions.

Survey Development

The following are the main questions addressed in this baseline data collection:

1. What are current graduation and college-going rates for different demographic groups?
2. What specialty education programs are currently offered?
3. What is the extent and type of current preparation for the HSEE?
4. What degree of familiarity do schools currently have with the HSEE?
5. How familiar are schools with the State Content Standards?
6. What plans are underway at schools to prepare faculty, parents, and community for the first administration of the HSEE?
7. What activities have schools undertaken to prepare students, including those with special needs and English language learners, for the first administration of the HSEE
8. How do schools anticipate addressing failures on the HSEE?
9. What are schools' predictions for first administration pass rates?
10. What are schools' predictions for the impact of the HSEE?
11. What are schools' predictions for influence of the HSEE on instructional practices
12. What are schools' predictions for opportunity to learn and opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills by various student groups?

Sampling and Administration

The goal for the sampling plan was to select districts for inclusion in the HSEE evaluation data collection efforts that would be as representative as possible. A complete description of the sampling procedure is presented in Wise, et al. (2000). The resulting sample for the principal and teacher surveys, as well as for the item review workshops, comprised 24 districts. An introductory letter from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and a project "fact sheet" were sent to each district superintendent to provide information about the evaluation and to request cooperation with the effort. In HumRRO's follow-up with the superintendents, they were asked to identify the principal, or other point-of-contact (POC), at one to six high schools we had selected to represent their districts. Based on this information, principal and teacher survey packets were shipped in early May 2000 to 84 schools to the attention of the principal or POC. The packets included the following:

- Cover letter and instructions to principal
- One principal survey
- Cover letter and instructions to teacher

- Four teacher surveys—two labeled for English-Language Arts and two labeled for mathematics
- Fact Sheet for California High School Exit Examination Evaluation
- Instructions and packaging for returning evaluation materials

Principals were asked to complete their questionnaire or to designate someone to do so. They also were asked to identify, based on faculty size, up to two teachers of Algebra 1, or other appropriate mathematics courses, and two 9th or 10th grade language arts teachers to complete the teacher surveys. Each survey was contained in a sealable envelope to be returned to the principal for shipment to HumRRO. The cover letters to both the principal and the teachers encouraged respondents to contact a HumRRO project member if there were questions or concerns. A copy of each of the survey instruments is included in Appendix A.

Return of evaluation materials was requested by the end of May. Follow-up telephone calls were initiated the first full week of June with schools that had not responded, to encourage completion of their evaluation materials.

Findings

Surveys were completed by 42 high school principals and 141 teachers, representing 49 schools. Results are reported in the following areas:

- Representativeness of the Survey Respondents
- Background
- Knowledge
- Preparation Thus Far
- Future Plans
- Expectations
- Other

Representativeness of the Survey Respondents

As described in our original report (Wise, et al., 2000, pages 4–5), a representative sample of 24 districts was selected for intensive study over the course of the HSEE evaluation. Replacements were identified for each district (except for Los Angeles, which is irreplaceable) in case the targeted district could not participate. One to six high schools were selected from each original and replacement district, depending on district size, to create a representative sample of 84 schools. Where possible, replacements were identified for each selected school. In small districts with only one or two high schools, all schools were in the original sample. Sampling ratios were established so that each school would represent approximately the same number of 10th grade students. In this way simple averages across the schools in the sample would provide estimates for all 10th grade students in the state.

The Spring 2000 principal and teacher surveys were distributed to the 84 targeted schools. Three districts, including 8 of the targeted schools, declined to participate, but it was too late to contact the replacement districts for the Spring 2000 surveys. Principal surveys were returned from 42 schools, half of the original sample or 55% of the sample excluding the districts that declined to participate. A few of the schools that did not respond

declined to participate in the evaluation study and will be replaced in subsequent surveys. The remainder of the sample was simply unable to complete the surveys due to heavy staff demands at the end of the school year. One or more teacher surveys were received from 49 schools, including most of the schools participating in the principal survey and also additional schools that did not return principal surveys. In most cases, responses were received from two mathematics teachers and two language arts teachers.

We made several comparisons to determine how well the responding schools represented the original target sample and the state as a whole. Table 4.1 shows a comparison of the distribution of the responding schools on the key stratification variables used in selecting the sample. For the principal survey, slightly fewer schools with a high percentage of English language learners (ELL), high STAR 1999 mathematics schools, and schools from large districts responded in comparison to the target sample. For the teacher survey, fewer high ELL schools, but more high STAR 1999 math schools and more small district schools responded. For both surveys, the responding schools did include both high and low ELL schools, high and low STAR 1999 mathematics schools, and schools from large, medium, and small districts in proportions that matched the target sample reasonably well.

STAR 1999 data were used in the original selection of districts and schools. Recently, school means for the STAR 2000 examination have become available. Table 4.2 shows a comparison of the target and responding schools to statewide averages for the STAR 2000 10^{th} grade mathematics and reading scores. The average scores match to within one or two points. In addition, the standard deviations are quite similar. This indicates that the distribution of schools with average scores at specific levels above or below the overall average also matches. For the teacher respondents, the school averages are slightly more variable, evidence that a few more schools were significantly below and above the overall average in comparison to statewide distributions. This result may be related to the slight overrepresentation of schools from small districts where school averages would be expected to be more variable since they are based on fewer students.

Table 4.1
Comparison of Responding Schools to the Target Sample

School Statistics	Target Schools	Responding Schools	
		Principals	Teachers
Percent High % English Language Learners	57	52	48
Percent High Average STAR 1999 Math Score	43	40	52
Percent in Large Districts	52	48	48
Percent in Medium Districts	29	33	26
Percent in Small Districts	19	19	26
Number of Schools	84	42	49
Number of Survey Respondents		42	141

Table 4.2

Comparison of Survey Respondents to Statewide Averages: STAR 2000 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

Population/Sample	Mathematics Average	SD	Reading Average	SD
Statewide[1]	698	16.0	691	16.7
Target School Sample[1]	700	16.8	693	17.0
Principal Respondents[2]	696	17.4	690	17.7
Teacher Respondents [2]	697	18.1	691	18.2

[1] School averages were weighted by the number of 10th grade students to estimate averages for all students in the state.

[2] School averages were weighted by the number of survey respondents (principals or teachers).

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 show comparisons of 10th grade averages and demographics from the STAR 1999 data. These data also show close correspondence between responding schools and statewide averages. In summary, the comparison data indicate that the schools from which survey responses were received are reasonably representative of the state as a whole. Based on sample size, the sampling error in estimates of statewide percentages is less than 8 points for the principal survey and less than 7 points for the teacher survey[4].

Table 4.3

Comparison of Survey Respondents to Statewide Averages: STAR 1999 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

Population/Sample	Mathematics Average	SD	Reading Average	SD
Statewide[1]	697	16.3	690	16.6
Target School Sample[1]	698	15.2	692	16.1
Principal Respondents[2]	694	15.5	689	16.6
Teacher Respondents [2]	695	16.3	690	16.9

[1] School averages were weighted by the number of 10th grade students to estimate averages for all students in the state.

[2] School averages were weighted by the number of survey respondents (principals or teachers).

Table 4.4

Comparison of Respondents to Statewide Averages: Key 1999 10th Grade Demographics

Population/Sample	% Hispanic	% English Language Learners
Statewide[1]	39	16
Target School Sample[1]	43	18
Principal Respondents[2]	38	16
Teacher Respondents [2]	38	14

[1] School averages were weighted by the number of 10th grade students to estimate averages for all students in the state.

[2] School averages were weighted by the number of survey respondents (principals or teachers).

4 The sampling error for a proportion is given by the square root of p*(1-p)/N, where n is the sample size. The maximum sampling error occurs when p = .5 (50%) and is one half the square root of N.

Background

Principals were asked to provide demographic information on themselves. Over half of the respondents (57%) were male, 69% were White, 21% Hispanic, 5% African-American, and 5% declined to specify; 94% reported education beyond a bachelor's degree (7% some graduate school, 79% master's degrees, 10% doctoral degrees) and 5% responded "other." They were asked to identify their primary subject area when they were teaching; the responses varied widely. The most common subject was English (21%). The respondents reported 1–31 years of experience as a principal (mean = 12.95, SD = 7.70) and 3–33 years teaching experience (mean = 13.46, SD = 8.19). They had worked 1–23 years in their present school and 5–38 years in public schools.

Teachers were also asked to provide demographic information. Over half (59%) of the respondent teachers were female; 84% were White; 6% were Hispanic; 5% were Asian/Pacific Islander; 1% were Black; and 3% were other or declined to specify; 9% reported having only a bachelor's degree; most respondents reported education beyond a bachelor's degree (40% some graduate school, 44% master's degrees, 4% doctoral degrees); 4% indicated other education; 48% indicated that the primary subject area they taught was English or language arts; 45% specified mathematics as their primary subject area; and 7% indicated "other." Seventy-seven percent indicated that their college training was in their primary subject area.

Principals were asked to provide background information on their schools. The current number of teachers on staff ranged from 3 to 200, with a mean of 75 (SD = 52). Principals reported that the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees ranged from 18% to 80%. Counselor-student ratios ranged from 1:1 to 1:1000, with a median of 400:1. Forty-eight percent of the responding schools currently have a testing coordinator; an additional 5% reported plans to have one by September 2000. Most schools (79%) operate on a semester basis; 12% configure their school year in quarters and 5% operate year-round schools. The majority of principals (67%) reported that their schools hold 6–7 academic periods per day. They reported, on average, a graduation rate of 80%, with rates varying by racial/ethnic group. Post-graduation attendance in 2-year colleges averaged 29% and 4-year colleges, 28%.

Principals were asked to indicate whether their schools offered various specialty education programs. Sixty-two percent offer remedial courses; 26%, magnet programs; 74%, special education; 52%, English-language learners; 19%, multicultural/diversity-based; 48%, Advanced Placement; 2%, International Baccalaureate; 43%, school/community/ business partnerships; 31%, targeted tutoring; and 12%, other.

Teachers were asked to provide some information about their own classes. Asked to provide average enrollment per class period, they reported 1–40 students, with a mean of 26 (SD =6.5). Seventy-nine percent report that they create groups within classes for instruction. Of these, 53% assign students to these groups randomly; 8% use ability grouping; 6% allow students to choose their groups; and 14% indicated that they assign students to groups on some other basis. Twenty-four percent of teachers reported that 100% of their students were fluent English speakers; 45% indicated that 90–99% were fluent in English; 21% reported

75–89%; 7% reported 50–74%; and 1% indicated that less than 50% of their students were fluent in English.

Teachers were asked about various instructional practices. Forty percent of teachers require students to maintain a portfolio; an additional 11% indicated that they require another product in lieu of the portfolio. Three-quarters of teachers (78%) estimated that students spend ½ hour or more of class time each week working with a partner or in a small group.

Teachers were asked to estimate the amount of time, on average, they believed students spend working on assignments outside the classroom each week. Half of the respondents (51%) estimated ½ to 3 hours; 19% estimated more than 3 hours; 20%, less than ½ hour; and 8%, none.

Teachers were asked to indicate the importance of specific instructional techniques. Techniques frequently endorsed as "very important" were: using questioning techniques to promote interaction and discussion (79%), developing students' abilities to make connections among content topics (76%), using problem-solving as a means and a goal (76%), and using direct instruction (69%).

Teachers were asked to estimate how often they plan for students to participate in specific types of activities. The activities rated most frequently (once or twice a week or almost every day) were: do work from textbooks (87%), do work from supplemental materials (77%), apply subject area knowledge to real-world situations (72%), write a few sentences (70%), and work in pairs or small groups (72%).

Knowledge

Principals and teachers were asked to report their familiarity with the HSEE and state content standards. The majority of principals (76%) responded that they had only general information about the exam. Twenty-two percent reported that they were very familiar with the exam, while 2% expressed no familiarity. Teachers reported less familiarity with the exam than the principals: 11% claimed to be very familiar, 66% generally familiar, and 22% reported no familiarity. Because we asked principals to identify a small number of teachers to complete this survey, we wanted to determine whether these teachers were representative of teachers at the school. To this end, we also asked the teachers to estimate how familiar other teachers at the school were with the exam. Indeed, other teachers were rated as less familiar: 4% very familiar, 62% generally familiar, and 31% not at all familiar. This is an indication that the respondents may be more involved with the HSEE than typical teachers.

It is unsurprising that the level of familiarity with extant state content standards was higher than with the as yet unimplemented exam. Sixty-seven percent of principals said they were very familiar with the state content standards and 31% reported general familiarity. Teachers reported more familiarity with state content standards than did principals: 65% very familiar, 29% generally familiar, and 3% not at all familiar. As was the case with the question on familiarity with the HSEE, these teachers rated their own familiarity with state content standards as higher than that of other teachers whom they rated: 36% very familiar, 48% generally familiar, and 4% not at all familiar.

One possible source of information on the HSEE and state content standards for teachers was the Item Rating Workshops conducted as part of our evaluation. We asked teachers whether they had participated in either of the May 2000 workshops; only 8% indicated that they had.

Respondents were asked to identify the source(s) of their information regarding the HSEE. Most principals indicated that their information came through official channels. Principals reported receiving information from: their district (93%), the state (76%), newspaper (60%), professional associations (52%), education organizations (33%), computer-based sources (29%), and other (5%). Two percent of principals indicated that they had no sources of information on the HSEE. Teachers reported that their information came from: school-provided information (57%), district-provided information (40%), newspaper (33%), state-provided information (21%), education organizations (15%), professional associations (13%), computer-based sources (9%), and other (11%). The other sources of information included the workshops in May and conversations with other staff. Nine percent of teachers indicated that they had no sources of information on the HSEE.

Principals were also asked to estimate how familiar their students and parents were with the exit exam. Responses indicated a belief that the exit exam was virtually unknown outside the educational community. Two percent of principals responded that students/parents were very familiar or familiar with HSEE. Twelve percent of principals estimated that students/parents were somewhat familiar; 48% not very familiar; and 38% replied that students/parents were not at all familiar.

Preparation Thus Far

Although the HSEE will not be administered operationally until March 2001, we asked about preparation that has already been initiated. One precursor to a successful program is to align school curricula with the state content standards, to ensure that students are being taught what will be tested. Thus respondents were queried about alignment with state content standards. In short, most principals indicated that they are already moving in the direction of alignment, but still have a way to go. All principals (100%) reported that their districts/schools encourage use of the content standards to organize instruction, and 81% said their schools are in the process of aligning their curricula to the standards. Fifty-two percent said that their schools/districts have plans to ensure that all students receive instruction in each of the content standards. Twenty-six percent stated that their textbooks do not align well with the content standards; 38% report that they can cover all the content standards with a mix of textbooks and supplemental material.

Along similar lines, respondents were asked to compare their district standards and the state content standards. Most principals (69%) responded that their districts have adopted the state standards, and another 19% reported that their district standards include more than the state content standards. Thus, a total of 88% indicated that their district standards encompass all state standards. However, 7% reported that the state standards include more than the district standards, and 5% indicated that they could not judge. No respondents indicated that the two sets of standards were different or that their districts had no official standards.

Respondents were asked how much time they personally spent during the 1999–2000 school year in activities related to the HSEE (e.g., meetings, discussions, curriculum review, professional development). Most principals reported spending 6–15 hours (50%) or 16–35 hours (24%). Nineteen percent reported fewer than 6 hours; 7%, more than 35 hours. Most teachers reported fewer hours than principals: 23% none, 57% fewer than 6 hours, 11% 6–15 hours, 3% 16–35 hours, and 4% more than 35 hours. Teachers were also asked to estimate the total 1999–2000 time they spent on classroom instruction activities related to the HSEE (e.g., department planning, student preparation, curriculum review). A greater amount of time was reported for these activities: 25% none, 39% fewer than 6 hours, 18% 6–15 hours, 6% 16–35 hours, and 9% more than 35 hours.

Respondents were asked to identify the specific activities they have undertaken to prepare students for the first administration of the HSEE. Although the students who will participate in the HSEE had not yet entered the ninth grade, most principals reported initiating some activities; only 17% indicated that they have implemented none. Figure 4.1a indicates the percentage of principals who reported implementing each activity, in descending order of endorsement; Figure 4.1b indicates teachers' responses, in the same order as Figure 4.1a to facilitate comparison. In general, fewer activities were reported by teachers; 36% indicated that none had taken place. This may mean principals were aware of some individual teachers implementing activities even though implementation was not school-wide.

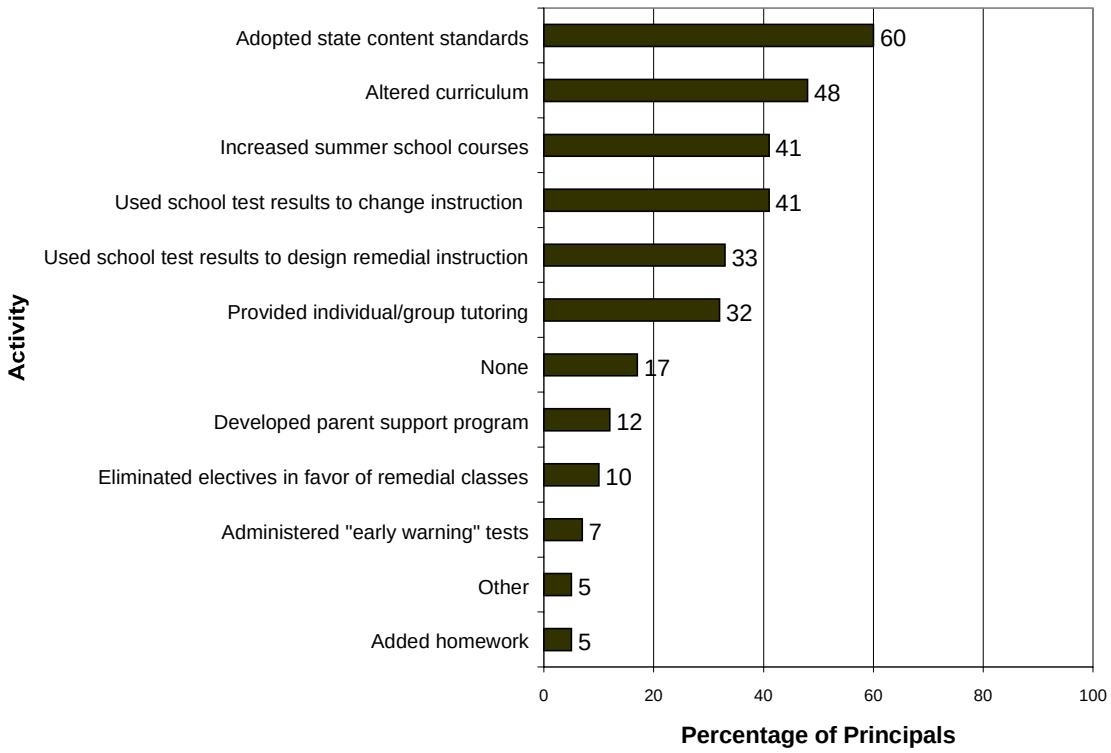

Figure 4.1a. Percentage of principals reporting activities already underway to prepare students for the HSEE.

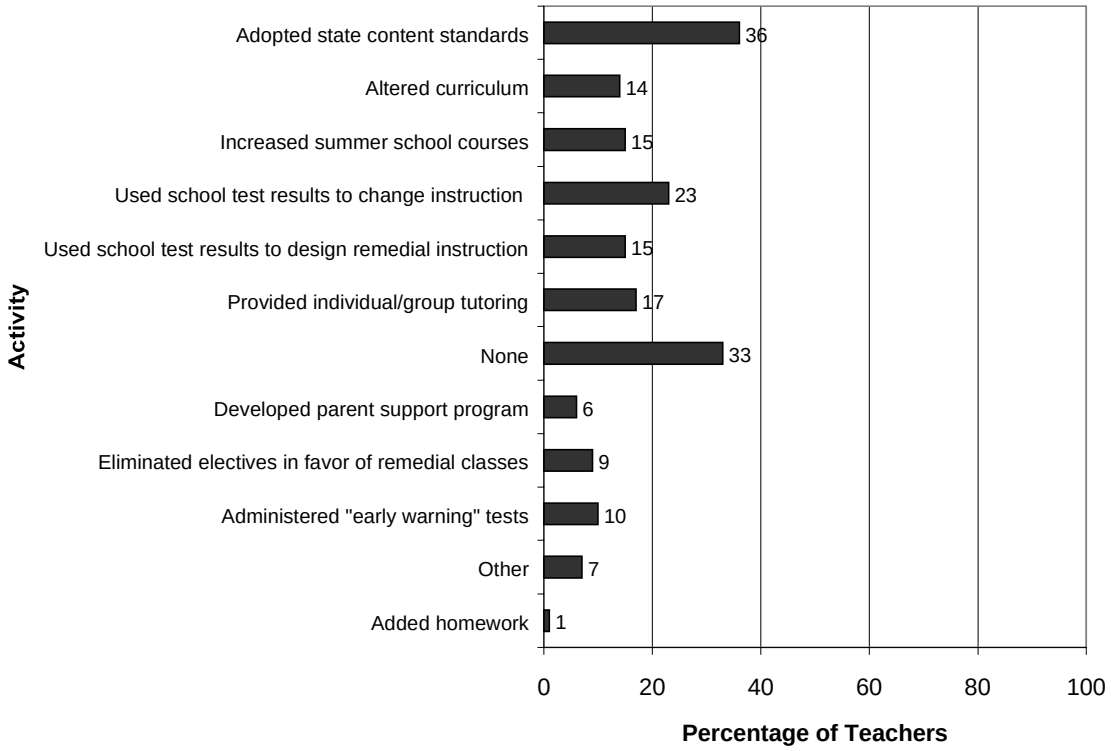

Figure 4.1b. Percentage of teachers reporting activities already underway to prepare students for the HSEE.

Teachers were asked to provide, in their own words, a list of "any specific changes made prior to May 1, 2000 to the subject area curriculum you are teaching or to your classroom instructional practices based on influences you anticipate from the exit exam." Of the 69 open-ended responses, nearly 30% indicated that they had made no changes to accommodate the HSEE. Another 19% reported that they already teach to the State Content Standards; 19% specified that they were focusing on higher-level subject content and 14% are focusing on test-taking techniques in the hope that these techniques will apply to the HSEE. Fewer than 10% reported that they were focusing more on basic math skills, participating in the task force to modify curriculum, or other responses.

Future Plans

In addition to any preparatory steps taken thus far, the surveys inquired about future plans to deal with this new requirement. In particular, efforts to prepare teachers and others for the exam, to prepare Individual Education Plans [IEPs] for special education students, and remediation plans subsequent to the first exam administration were probed.

Principals were provided a list of possible remedial practices and asked which they planned. Figure 4.2a lists the percentage of principals who endorsed each activity (in descending order of endorsement) and Figure 4.2b reflects teacher responses to the same question (in the same order as the principal graph). Similar to the pattern of preparatory steps, more principals reported activities than did teachers. For example, only 14% of

principals indicated that no plans had been made for remediation, compared to 38% of teachers.

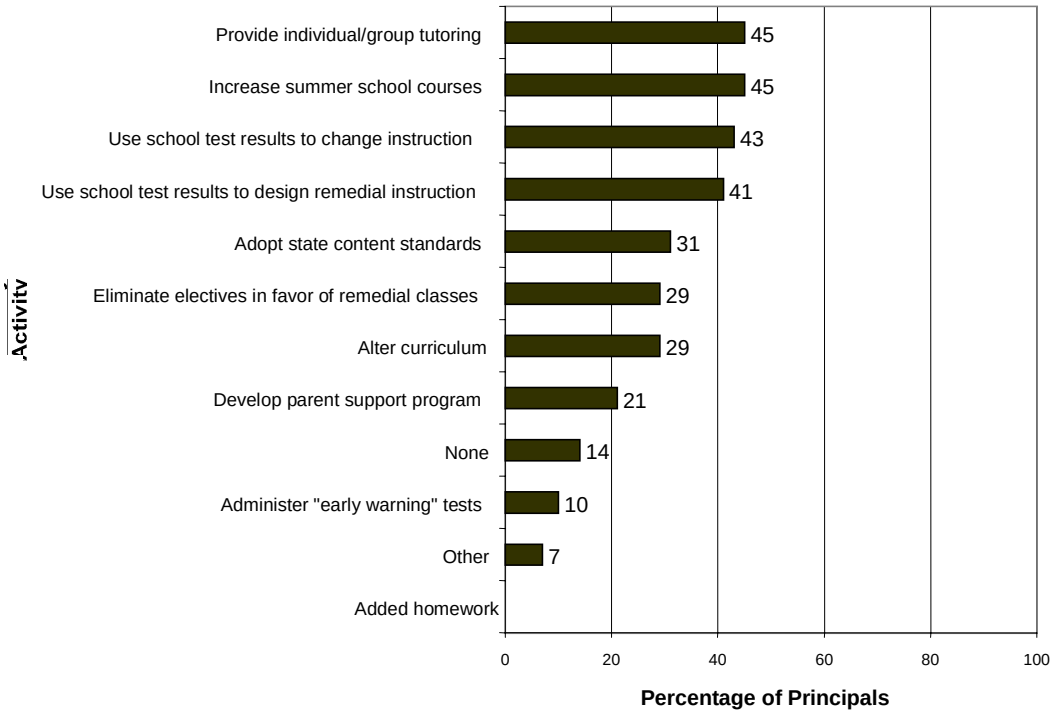

Figure 4.2a. Percentage of principals reporting plans for remediation of students who do not pass the HSEE.

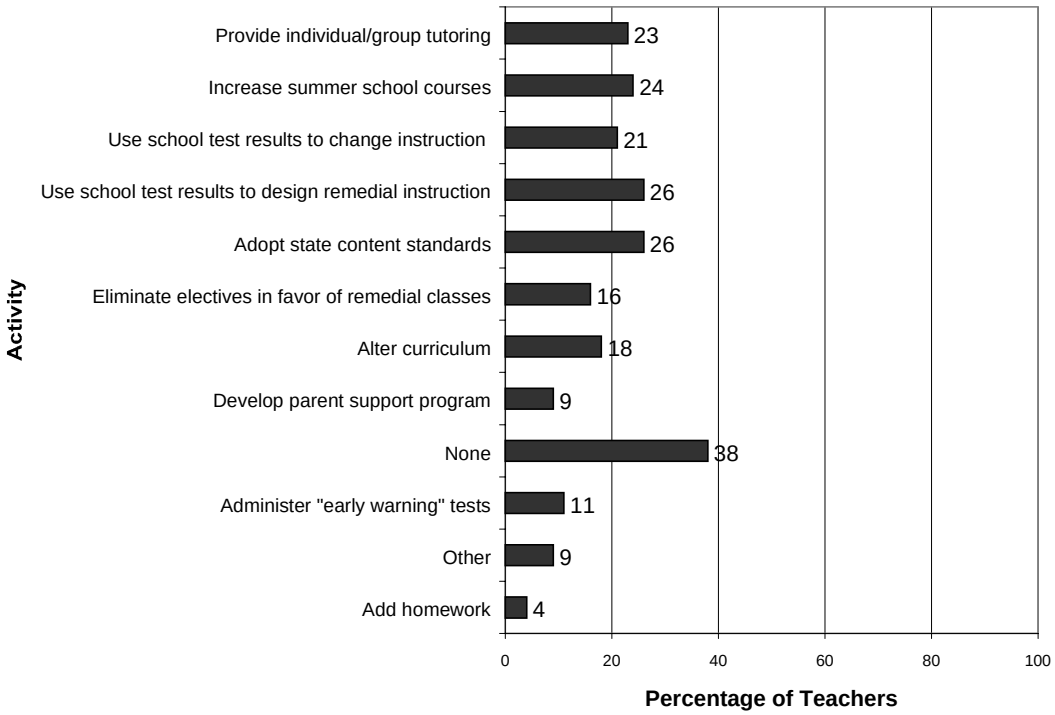

Figure 4.2b. Percentage of teachers reporting plans for remediation of students who do not pass the HSEE.

Approximately half of the 40 open-ended responses on "plans to prepare staff, parents, and the community for the initial exam administration" cited plans for staff-related efforts such as department and faculty meetings, in-service training, and content and curriculum workshops. A third of the responses mentioned public outreach, parent communications, and general dissemination of information about the exam. Several respondents (8%) stated that they are waiting for direction from CDE—specifically to rule on staff development days that are not "buy back days."

For principals, almost 30% of the 34 open-ended responses on "plans to work with students who fail the initial exam administration" reiterated that no plans had been formed yet, or that the schools were waiting on district plans or were waiting for the exam itself to plan. Half of their comments mentioned plans to notify parents and to offer tutoring or other practice, expanded summer school and reading programs, and development or modifications of remedial and exam support courses. Among the remaining responses were some specific plans such as (a) revising a student's 4-year high school plan to improve the areas of weakness, and (b) implementing a Fall 2000 mandatory parent and student orientation and administration of diagnostic tests in mathematics, reading, and writing.

Along similar lines, teachers were asked to indicate, in their own words, responsibilities they believed they were likely to be assigned to get students through successful completion of the exam. Eighty-one teachers responded. The most common response, by far, was that they expected to be called upon to provide tutoring, remediation, added instruction, or teach summer school (58%). Fewer respondents indicated that they would be asked to revise curriculum (15%) or identify students' strengths and weaknesses or place students in appropriate classes (11%). Fewer than 10% reported that they would be assigned to work on test-talking strategies or give sample tests, work with parents, or have general higher responsibilities

Over half of the principals' 21 open-ended responses on "plans or strategies to prepare for IEP changes that will allow participation of students with disabilities" stated they had made no plans yet or that they will develop a plan according to the law. One-fourth of the principals said they would continue to follow the IEP recommendations for accommodations. Among the remaining responses were some specific plans such as (a) implementing a Fall 2000 plan to identify special needs students who are likely to participate in the exam and noting what accommodations will be needed, (b) starting to expose special needs students to algebra, and (c) including special needs student in other HSEE efforts.

Teachers were asked to specify any specific curricular or instructional changes they planned to make in the future. Seventy-six teachers provided responses to this open-ended question. Responses varied widely: 24% plan to focus on higher-level subject content; 22% reported that they don't know or are not familiar with the test content yet; 14% plan to modify their course content according to what is and is not tested; 11% plan to implement to State Content Standards. Fewer than 10% indicated that they plan to focus on more basic math skills, practice more test-taking techniques, select new textbooks, or depend on district changes or mandates. Another 11% provided other responses that could not be readily categorized.

Expectations

Several survey questions queried the respondent's expectations for the exam: anticipated pass rates, impact of the exam on student motivation and parental involvement, and so on.

Principals were asked to estimate the percentage of current 10th grade students (Class of 2002) who would earn a passing grade on the upcoming exam.[5] As Figure 4.3 indicates, responses were generally guarded. Half (50%) of principals predicted that fewer than 50% of students would pass the exam; 29% predicted 50–74% of students would pass; 14% predicted 75–95%; and 5% of principals predicted that more than 95% of students would pass.

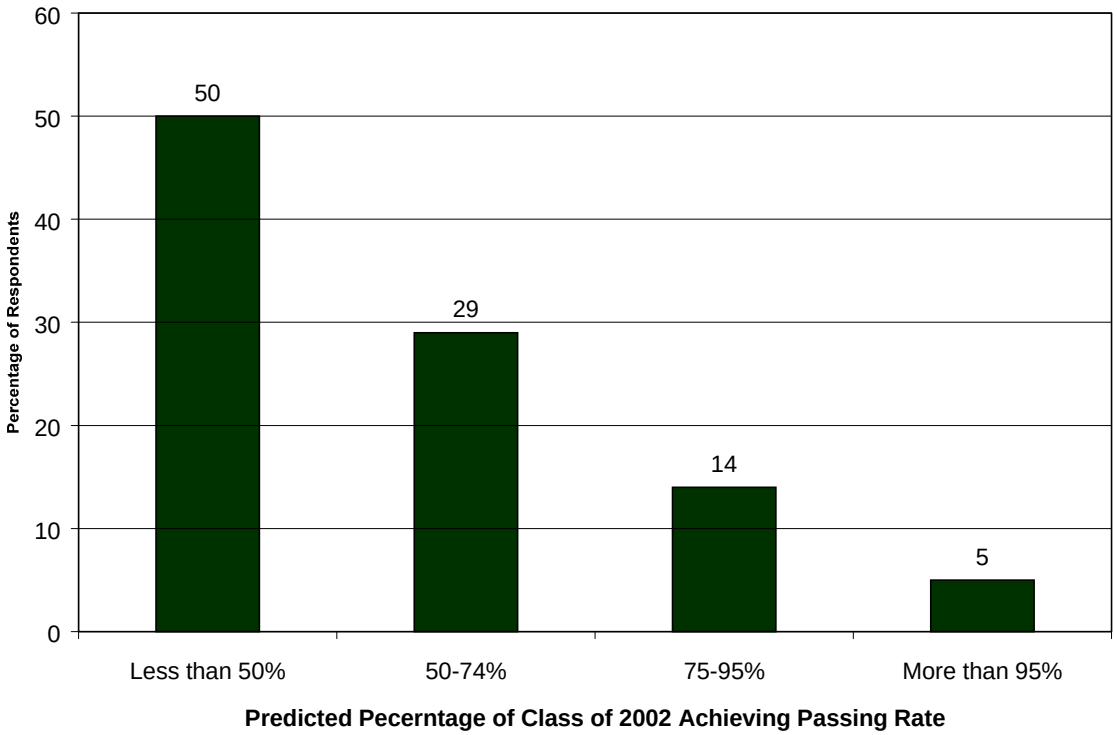

Figure 4.3. Principals' predictions of pass rates if the Class of 2002 were to take the exam.

Teachers were asked two variants of the same question. They were asked to estimate the preparedness of students to pass the HSEE in the 9th grade and in the 10th grade, based upon the teacher's knowledge of the feeder schools. As Figure 4.4 indicates, nineteen percent of teachers responded that students were prepared (or better) in the 9th grade; 40% indicated that students were prepared or better in the 10th grade. Although the structure of the questions asked of principals and teachers differed, the responses were similar.

[5] Note that this cohort will not take the exam; the first class to participate will be the Class of 2004, which is now entering the 9th grade. Because the first participating group is not yet in high school, principals were asked to assess current 10th graders (Class of 2002) as a proxy for the Class of 2004.

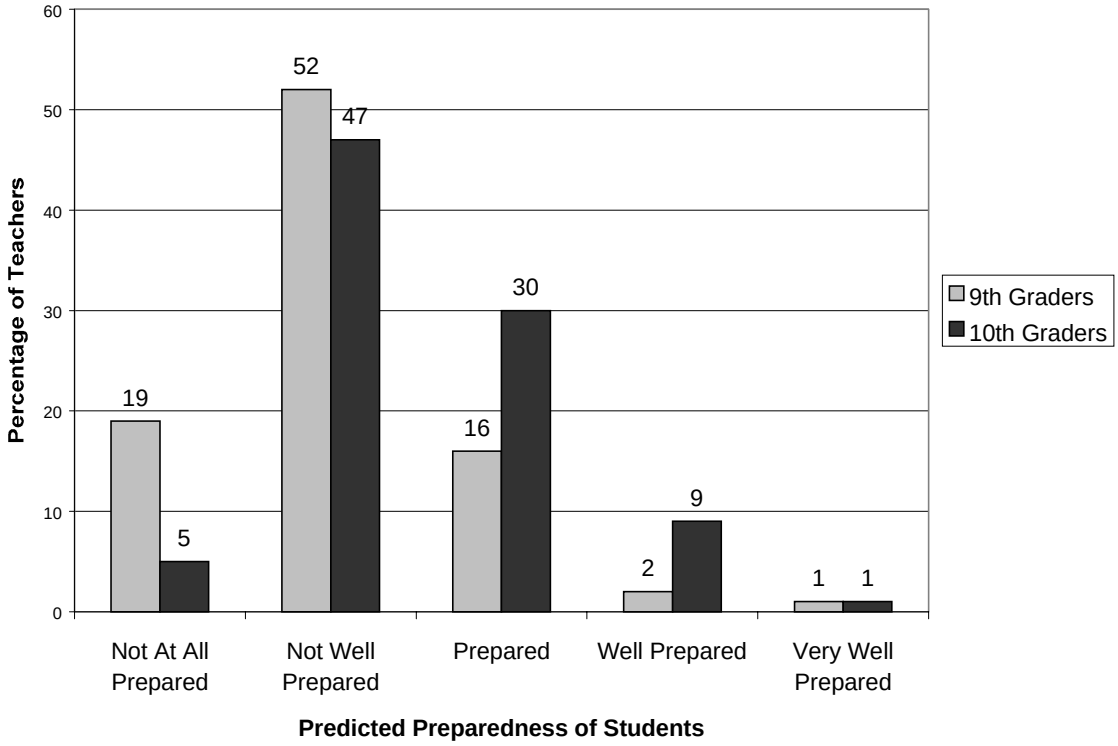

Figure 4.4. Teacher's estimates of preparedness of students to pass the HSEE in the 9th and 10th grades.

Principals and teachers were also asked to predict the impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement, under various circumstances. Figures 4.5a and 4.5b reflect the impacts anticipated prior to administration of the exam. Principals predicted a wider variety of impact on student motivation than on parental involvement. Some negative impact on student motivation was predicted prior to the exam, but largely neutral or positive effects were posited for parental involvement prior to the first administration. Comparison of Figures 4.5a and 4.5b indicate that teachers are somewhat more pessimistic than principals about the impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement.

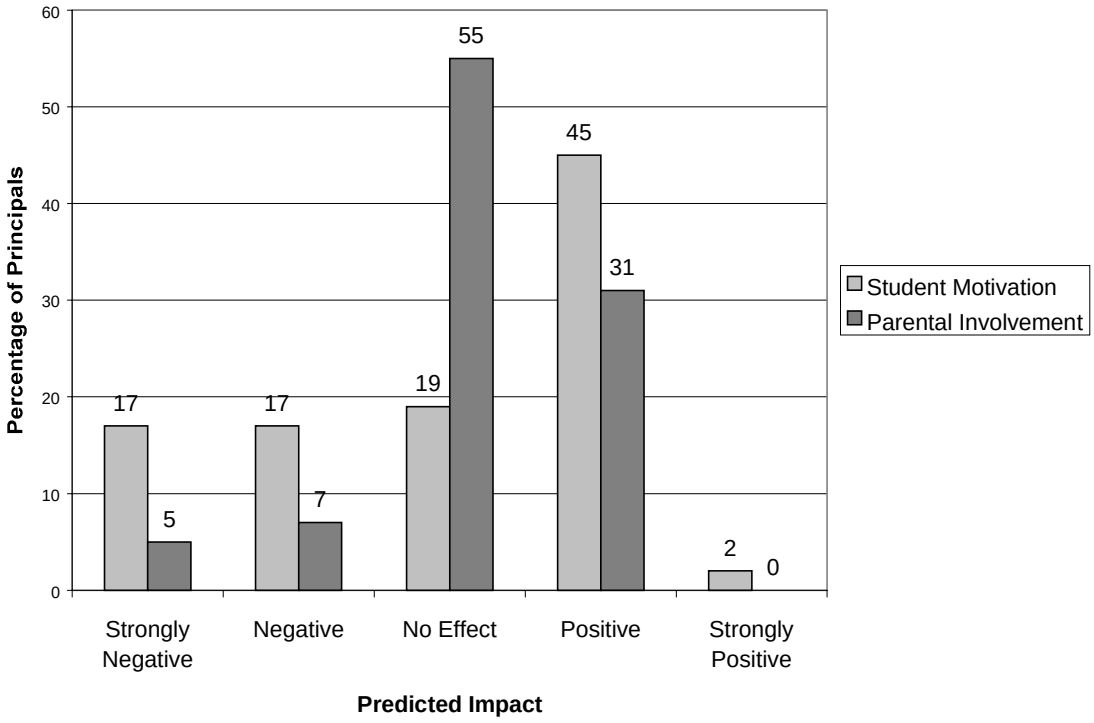

Figure 4.5a. Principals' predicted impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement of students who pass the exam on the first attempt

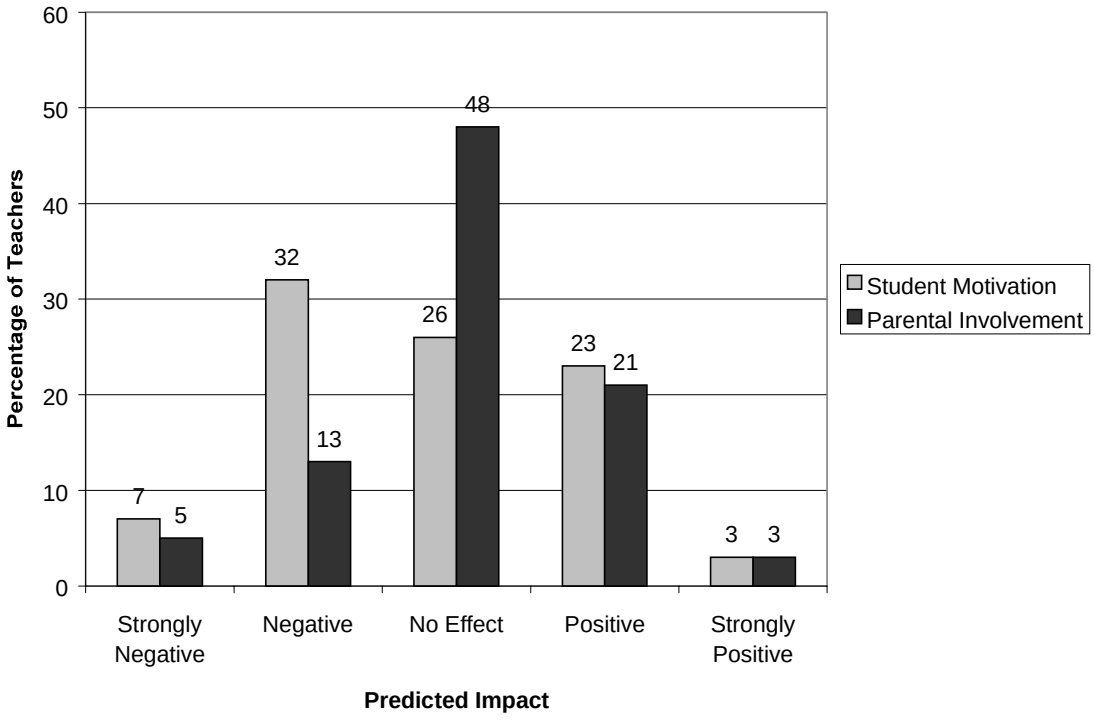

Figure 4.5b. Teachers' predicted impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement of students who pass the exam on the first attempt

Principals and teachers were asked to predict the same two concepts—student motivation and parental involvement—for those students who pass the exam in the first administration. The predictions for this group were more positive. As Figure 4.6a depicts, only 5% of principals expected that student motivation would drop after students cleared the hurdle of the HSEE. Thirty-three percent of principals predicted that student motivation would be unaffected by passing the exam; 62% predicted a positive or strongly positive effect. Half of principals expected no impact on parental involvement; 33% predicted a positive effect, 12% a strongly positive impact, and 2% a strongly negative impact on parental involvement for those students who pass the exam early in their high school careers.

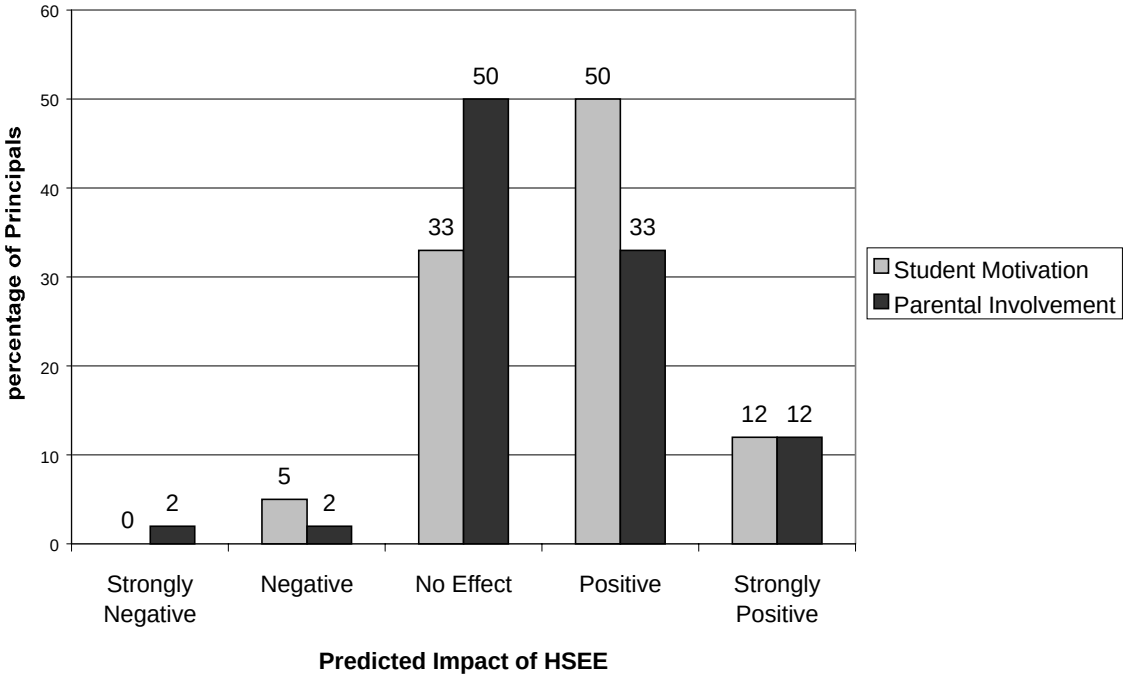

Figure 4.6a. Principals' predicted impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement of students who pass the exam on the first attempt

Here again, principals were more optimistic than teachers. Figure 4.6b indicates that fourteen percent of teachers expected a negative or strongly negative impact on student motivation after passing the exam on the first attempt. Thirty-eight percent of teachers predicted that student motivation would be unaffected by passing the exam; 39% predicted a positive or strongly positive effect. Half of teachers (49%) expected no impact on parental involvement; 8% expected a negative or strongly negative effect; 29% predicted a positive effect and 6% a strongly positive impact on parental involvement for those students who pass the exam early in their high school careers. Nine percent of teachers declined to estimate the impact of passing the test on student motivation or parental involvement.

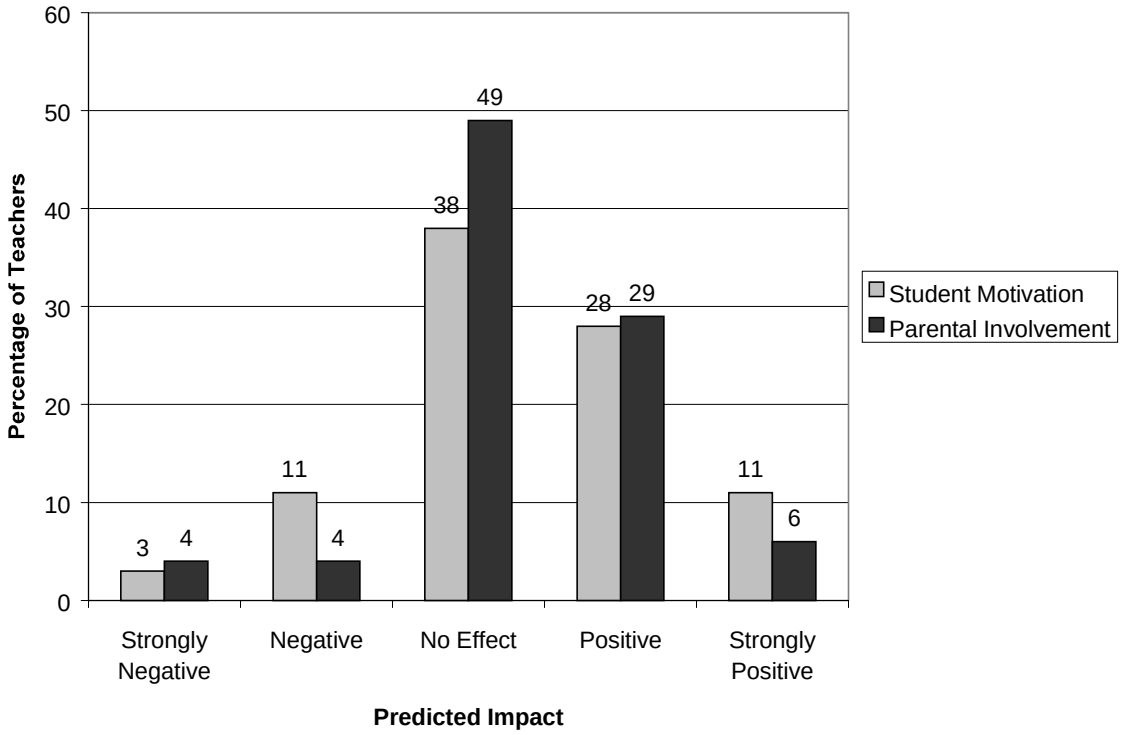

Figure 4.6b. Teachers' predicted impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement of students who pass the exam on the first attempt

For those students who fail the exam on the first try, the principals' and teachers' predictions were quite different from pre-examination predictions. Figures 4.7a and 4.7b illustrate response patterns for principals and teachers, respectively. Principals were split on whether the impact of failing the exam would have a negative effect on student motivation; 10% predicted a strongly negative effect; 36%, negative; 17%, no effect, 33%, positive, and 2% strongly positive. Predictions for parental involvement were very similar to those of student motivation: 7% predicted a strongly negative effect; 36%, negative; 14%, no effect; 40%, positive; and 2%, strongly positive. There was a similar pattern for teacher responses, albeit slightly more negative overall: regarding student motivation, 7% predicted a strongly negative effect; 30%, negative; 16%, no effect, 33%, positive; and 4%, strongly positive. As for parental involvement, 6% of teachers predicted a strongly negative effect; 21%, negative; 28%, no effect; 32%, positive; and 2%, strongly positive.

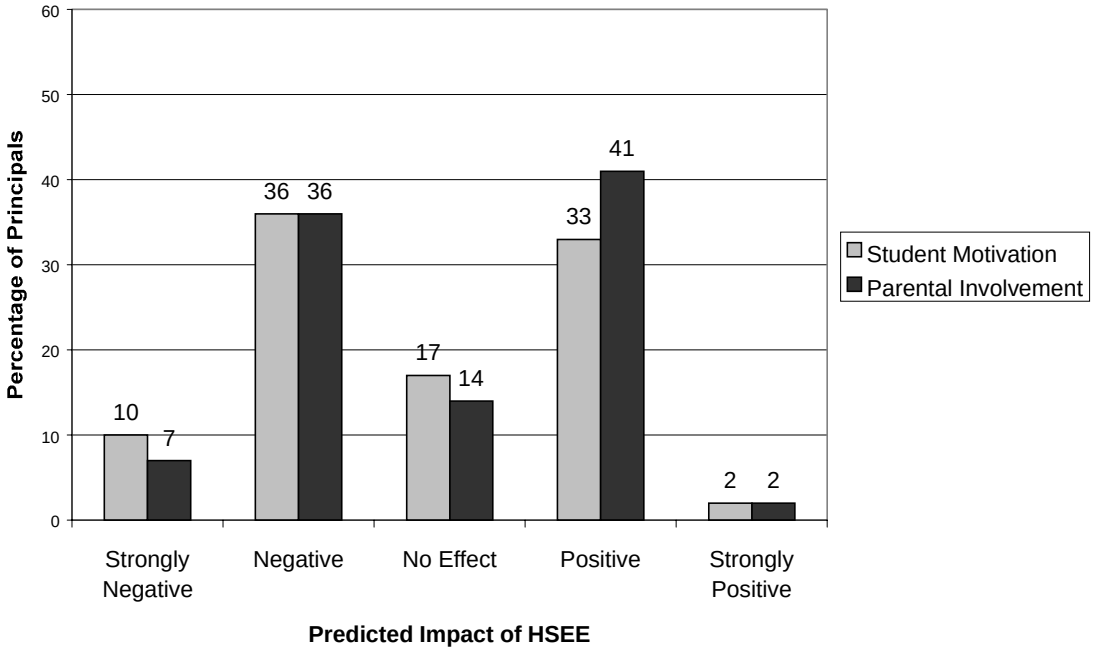

Figure 4.7a. Principals' predicted impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement of students who fail the exam on the first attempt.

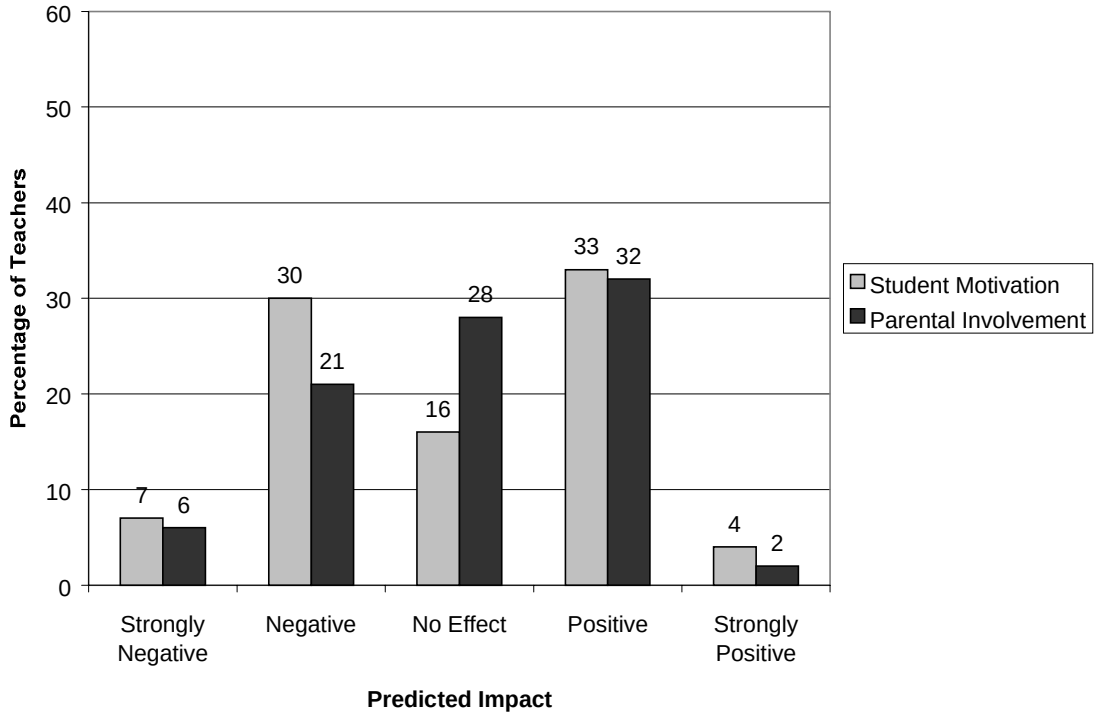

Figure 4.7b. Teachers' predicted impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement of students who fail the exam on the first attempt.

Principals and teachers were also asked to predict the impact of the HSEE on student retention and dropout rates. Responses were somewhat negative overall. Figures 4.8a and 4.8b reveal that predictions followed a similar pattern on both questions. Fifty-five percent of principals anticipated a strongly negative or negative impact on student retention rates; 64% predicted a strongly negative or negative impact on student dropout rates. Twenty-nine percent predicted no effect on student retention and 21% predicted no effect on student dropouts. Seventeen percent anticipated a positive or strongly positive effect on student retention rate and 14% expected a positive or strongly positive effect on student dropout rate. Teachers responded very similarly to principals, although as in previous questions, their answers were slightly more negative.

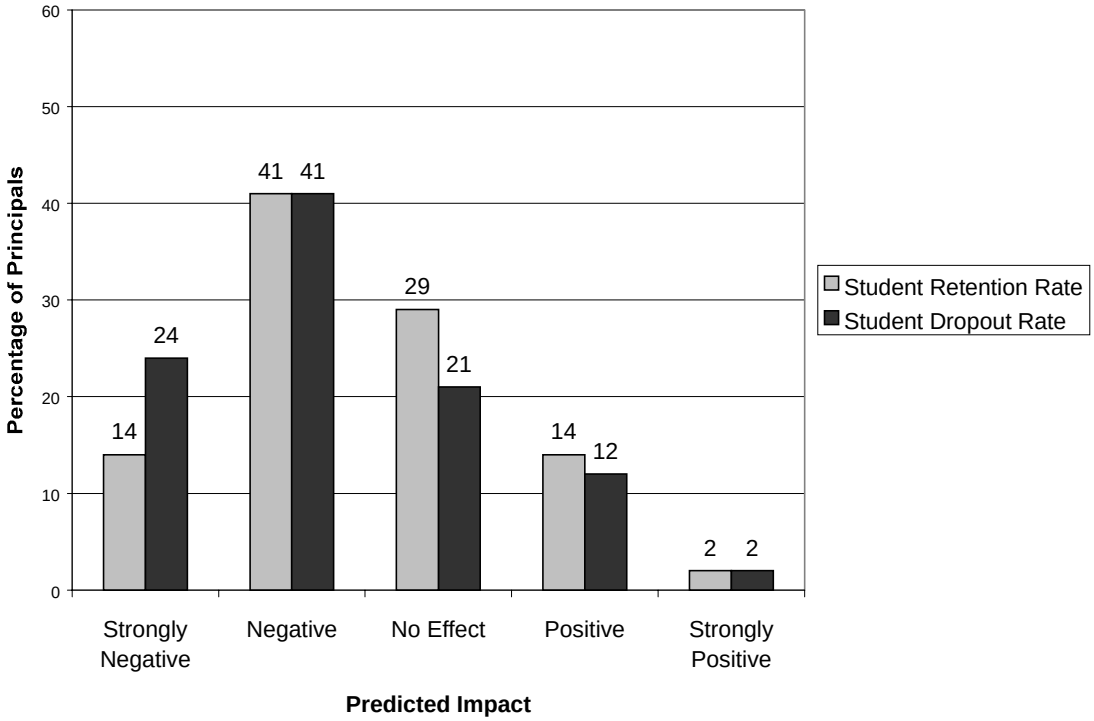

Figure 4.8a. Principals' predicted impact of the HSEE on student retention and dropout rates.

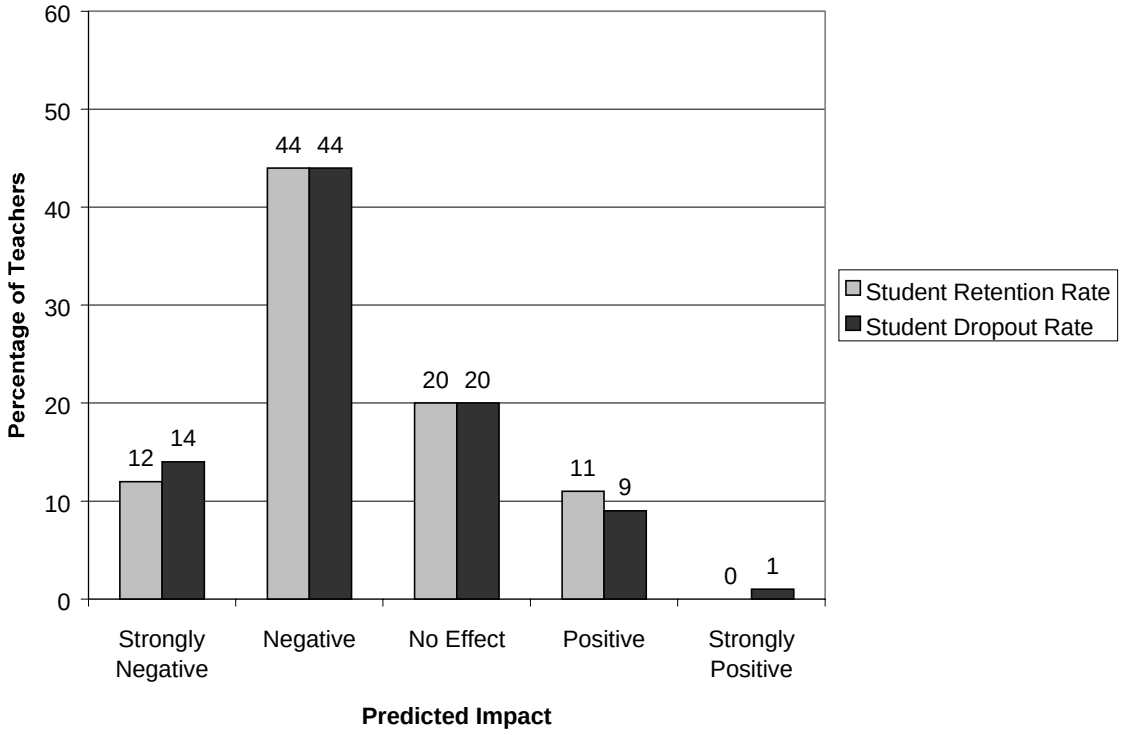

Figure 4.8b. Teachers' predicted impact of the HSEE on student retention and dropout rates.

Principals were asked to predict, based on what they knew about their schools, the influence of the HSEE on instructional practices. Responses ranged from moderately optimistic to neutral: 74% responded that practices would be improved, 10% predicted no effect, and 2% said extremely weakened. No respondents chose the options of strongly improved or weakened and 14% declined to respond.

Teachers were asked the same question about the influence of the HSEE on instructional practices, but they were asked to provide separate estimates for 3 school years. Figure 4.9 provides the responses for all 3 years. The pattern of responses indicates that teachers expect the HSEE to have a positive impact on instruction, and they expect that impact to grow increasingly positive over time.

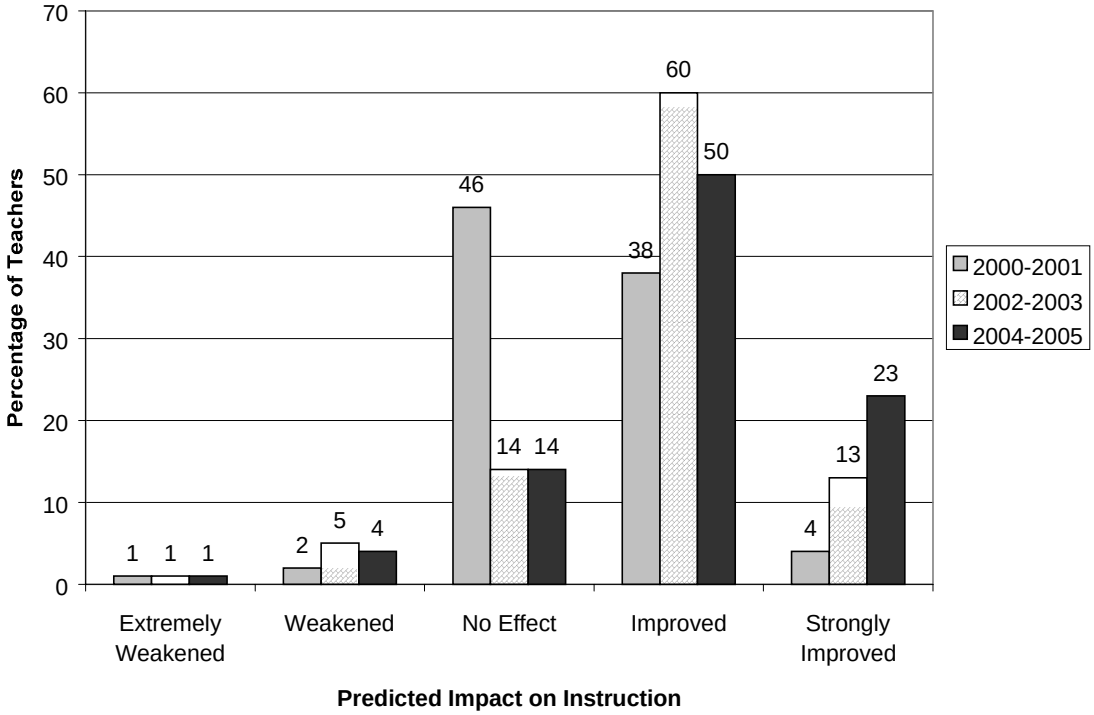

Figure 4.9. Teachers' prediction of influence of the HSEE on instructional practices over time.

One of the concerns when implementing a new exam is whether there is a differential impact on various subgroup populations. We asked principals and teachers to predict the opportunity to learn the material covered by the exam for the total student population, as well as for specific subgroups. Five percent of principals indicated that they were "not sure of the effect on the total student population;" 17% reported an excellent opportunity to learn; 26% selected good; 31%, adequate; and 19%, poor. No principals reported "no opportunity" to learn.

These same questions were asked about four other groups: students with disabilities, English-language learners, English-language learners in targeted subject areas, and economically disadvantaged students. The predictions were slightly more negative for the targeted groups; the predictions of poor opportunity to learn increased from 19% for all students, to 31% for students with disabilities, 36% for English-language learners, 29% for English-language learners in targeted subjects areas, and 24% for economically disadvantaged students. Comparison of principal responses and teacher responses revealed similar patterns.

We asked principals and teachers a similar set of questions regarding students' opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the exam. Figure 4.10a depicts principal and teacher responses regarding the full student population: 5% of principals expressed that they were unsure; 12%, excellent; 26%, good; 40%, adequate; and 10% poor. No principals selected a response of "none." Teachers provided similar responses, with the bulk of predictions falling in the "adequate" and "good" categories.

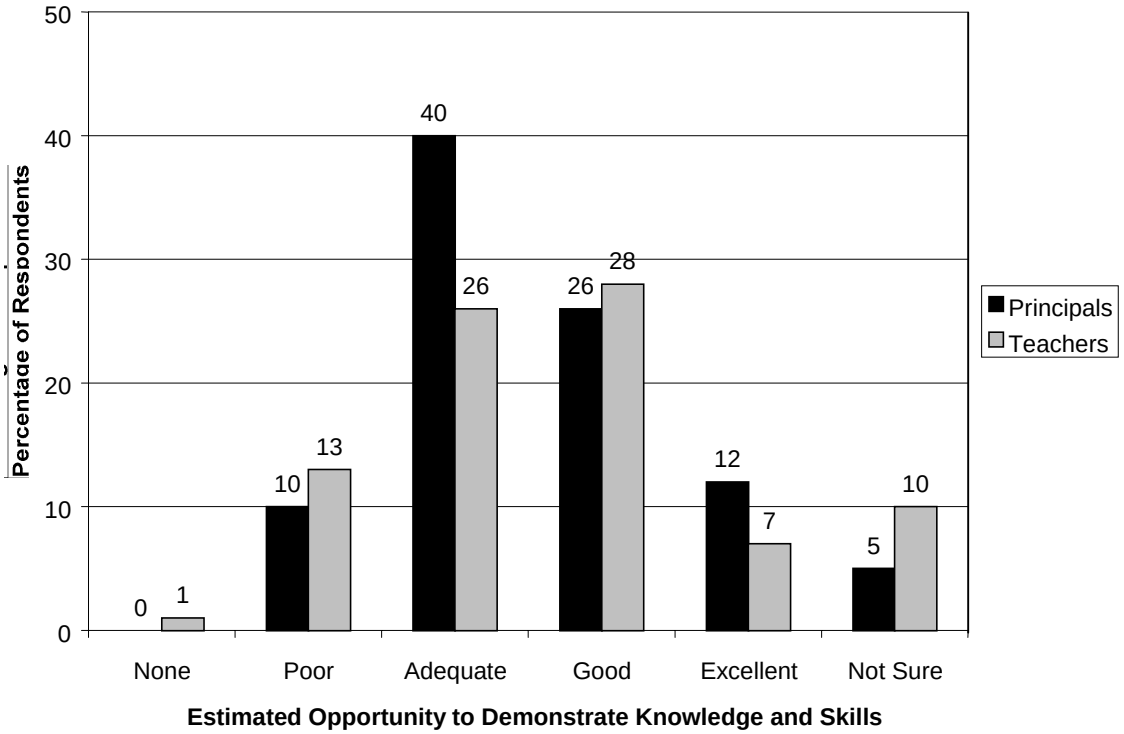

Figure 4.10a. Principal and teacher estimates of the opportunity for all students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the exam.

For the various student subgroups, responses were less optimistic; a none-to-poor opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills was anticipated for students with disabilities by 29% of principals; English-language learners, 29%; English-language learners in targeted subject areas, 24%; and economically disadvantaged students, 19%. Teachers provided similar responses, although teachers estimated the proportion of each group having none/poor opportunity as about 2–5 percentage points higher, across the board, than did principals. The sole exception was for the category of students with disabilities; teachers were more optimistic than principals, predicting that 24% would have none/poor opportunity. Figure 4-10b compares the principal and teacher responses of "none" or "poor" opportunity for each of these student subgroups.

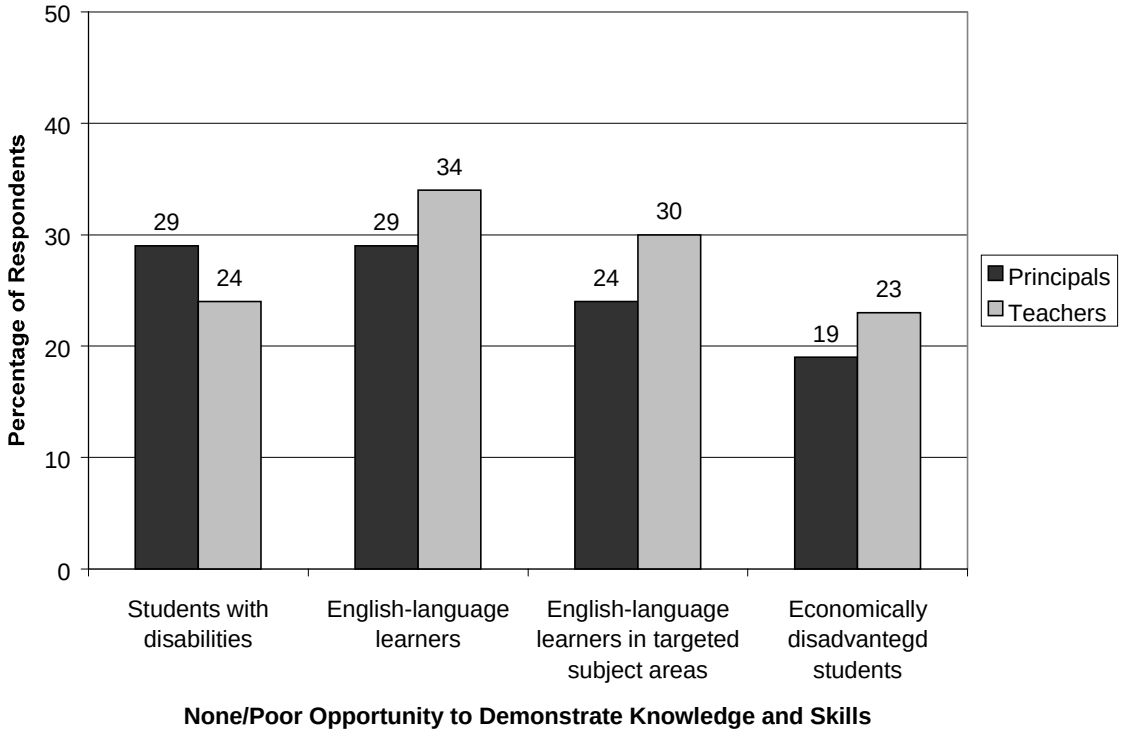

Figure 4.10b. Principal and teacher estimates of none/poor opportunity for various student subgroups to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the exam.

Challenges

When asked to "describe challenges facing the school and students in successfully meeting the exam requirements," 30% of the 30 open-ended responses from principals and 38% of the 80 open-ended responses from teachers commented on the low levels of student competency and skills of present incoming high schoolers—especially for Continuation and Community Day schools. Also 30% of the principals described alignment issues, and 13% referred to the difficulties of meeting algebra and English/language arts proficiencies—especially for English-language learners. Fourteen percent of teacher comments indicated that low attendance or some aspect of home life (e.g., lack of parental involvement, unstable home lives, transience) as important challenges; 11% of teacher comments reflected lack of student motivation. Of the 20% who cited time requirements and the burden of testing, two comments particularly captured this challenge and underscored the lack of knowledge about the purpose of the test:

> "We test too much behavior Stanford 9, SAT, ACT, Golden State, exit exam, end of course exams, A.P. When do we teach? It will take up almost the whole month of May–can we combine any of these tests?"

> "We will offer a summer remedial program for 9th graders. We will visit the homes of the incoming 9th graders; [and we] will provide tutoring, [but] I think the testing system is too fragmented—too thinly spread out to be successful."

In describing "benefits to the school and students associated with the exit exam" two-thirds of the 19 principals who commented cited having students meet a standard of basic skills in English and mathematics before leaving high school. The remaining responses were split between those placing a focus on curriculum and those who said there were no benefits or they were unsure about any benefits. Teachers, on the other hand, emphasized creating standards, defining expectations, or improving the curriculum (30% of 50 comments), motivating students and improving their performance (26%), accountability (16%), and causing graduating students to be academically prepared (12%).

Other

Principals were asked to add any comments about specific factors at their schools that they felt would influence the exit examination. Of 17 rather extensive entries, half described schools operating with students at the poverty level, with low academic preparation, and with disengaged parents. They also expressed concern that the exit exam will result in increased dropout rates. Two comments reiterated concern about the burden of adding one more test to an already challenging schedule. Two comments focused on the pilot test questions. One of these stated that the questions are very White, middle class and not representative of a diverse student population. The other objected to the group proportions used in the pilot testing as over-representing special education and minority students and under-representing Caucasian students. They feared that the test results would not be a true reflection of their predominantly Caucasian school.

Similarly, teachers were asked to add any comments about "factors specific to you, your classes, or your school that are influencing the exit examination." Thirty-six percent of the 44 open-ended comments indicated that their students are "at risk" because of home lives, language barriers, low socioeconomic status, or under-achievement at other high schools. Another 27% commented on the test itself, which they haven't yet seen and thus preparedness is affected; some of these respondents questioned the validity of the test for predicting future success or thought that the test would be either difficult or unchallenging for their students. Sixteen percent of teachers felt that the highly-involved community and parents would be helpful. Fewer than 10% specified that examinations were a bad idea or should be taken outside school hours; will raise standards; will change their approach to teaching; will reduce their control over the curriculum; will depend on pre-high school preparedness; the dropout rate would increase; or expressed appreciation for their small class sizes.

Summary

Not surprisingly, principals and teachers agree that they are more familiar with state content standards than with the HSEE. Principals rated themselves as more familiar than teachers rated themselves. These teachers, in turn, rated themselves as more familiar than their peers. This latter point may indicate that the sample of teachers who responded to the survey were more knowledgeable about the HSEE than the typical teacher, a possibility that should be kept in mind when generalizing from these responses.

Some principals and teachers reported that they had no source of information on the HSEE. Most relied primarily upon official channels such as state and district sources; teachers reported a greater reliance upon newspaper accounts than did principals. Principals believed that students and parents are largely unfamiliar with the HSEE at this time.

Some preparatory activities have already begun. For example, many districts have made an effort to align their content standards with those of the state. The vast majority of principals indicated that their district content standards encompass all state content standards. Principals reported more preparatory activities than teachers did; a third of teachers were unaware of any preparatory activities thus far.

In addition to adopting the state content standards in preparation for the HSEE, most principals reported the importance of preparing staff through such efforts as planning curriculum workshops and inservice training. Most principals also reported initiating some type of activity to prepare students for the first administration of the HSEE; efforts included altered curriculum and increased summer school courses. A third of the teachers, however, reported having no activity underway at the present specifically to help students prepare for the test.

Student preparedness estimates were mildly pessimistic; in general, principals provided slightly more optimistic predictions than did teachers. Both principals and teachers expressed some concern that students arrive at high school unprepared, and that elementary and middle schools must become involved in the process of preparing students for the HSEE.

Teachers and principals were in basic agreement about the impacts of the test in various situations. For example, predictions of the impact of the HSEE on student motivation and parental involvement, prior to the first administration, were neutral-to-mildly positive. For those students who pass the exam on the first attempt, school personnel expect that the effects on both student motivation and parental involvement will be positive or neutral; this expectation runs counter to the concern that students may lose motivation if they clear the exam hurdle too soon in their high school careers. For those students who fail on the first attempt, however, expectations are different. Relatively few respondents predicted that failure would have a neutral effect on student motivation, but two camps emerged: nearly the same number of respondents expected a negative or strongly negative impact as predicted a positive impact. Principals and teachers were very consistent in their prediction that the effects of the HSEE upon student retention rates and student dropout rates will be negative.

Despite these concerns about the effects on student motivation and parental involvement, principals and teachers expected that the impact of the HSEE on instructional practices would be positive. Further, teachers were asked to estimate effects next year and in 3 and 5 years; they predicted greater improvement with time.

Respondents expected differential impacts for certain student subgroups. They anticipated that opportunity to learn would be lower for English-language learners and students with disabilities than for the student population as a whole. Fewer respondents believed that these differences would be seen with economically disadvantaged students.

In short, the principals and teacher survey responses indicate:

- A need for more information on the exam and staff development to support its implementation;
- Concerns about student preparedness;
- Mixed predictions about the impact of the exam on student motivation;
- Concerns about the impact of the exam on retention rates and dropout rates;
- Concerns about the success of disadvantaged groups, especially English-language learners and students with disabilities; and
- Positive expectations of the impact of the HSEE on instructional practices.